

Last week, we welcomed a multi-party, multi-ethnic delegation of eight Members of the Afghan Parliament at Stevenson High School as a part of the House Democracy Assistance Commission, a bi-partisan organization in Congress working to share our process of government with recently established democracies.

It was a heartfelt experience to see these newly elected legislators speak to over 200 Stevenson High School students about their work to move Afghanistan towards a prosperous future and away from their war torn past.

Joining the Afghan lawmakers were several members of their staff including Zahra Sahak. For the first time since the fall of the Taliban, women like Ms. Sahak can pursue the professions they choose. Ms. Sahak was banned from school from age six to 15 by the Taleban dictatorship. After the international Coalition triggered the downfall of the Taleban, Ms. Sahak returned to school – the Miriam High School for Girls that I visited last January -- and then earned her college degree. She now staffs the Legislative Committee and is responsible for drafting bills considered by Parliament.

The delegation represents a diverse cross-section of the Afghan population from veterans to doctors to scholars and professors. They visited the Kenilworth Village Board, North Chicago, the Lake County Board, Great Lakes and the Baha'i Temple. I want to give a special thanks to the Leaders of the Baha'i Spiritual Assembly for welcoming our guests with Afghan tea and having several members who spoke fluent Farsi to guide our guests.